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HB 3305

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR A RISK ANALYSIS

House Committee on Agriculture

Public Hearing - February 9, 1998
8:30A.M., Room 423 State Capitol

By

John T. Harrison, Environmental Center

HB 3305 would appropriate funds for a risk analysis to assess the threat that alien plant and animal species pose to Hawaii's existing ecology.

Our statement on this measure does not constitute an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

There are three implied assumptions in this measure:

1. Hawaii's alien species problem is divisible into rankable components.
2. It is possible to "rid Hawaii of these pests permanently."
3. A strategy to address the alien species problem hasn't been devised.

Hawaii's alien species problem is certainly multidimensional, but assigning a ranked priority to one species over another is a subjective process by which the larger issue is clouded. I would caution against any effort to hold one case more ecologically threatening than another, because the complexity of Hawaii's ecosystem makes such judgments inherently simplistic.

It may be possible, with concerted effort, to extirpate one or more of the myriad alien species that have invaded Hawaii, but the unpleasant reality is that many, and arguably some of the most damaging, will never be eradicated. Avian malaria, and the mosquitos that carry the disease, now are a permanent element of Hawaii's ecosystem. Similarly, contrary to fears expressed by the hunting community, the feral pig will never be removed entirely.

Finally, existing alien species management in Hawaii has developed from a long and detailed series of planning and data collection efforts. Efforts are underway to contain the spread of established invaders, to remove those that can be isolated, and most importantly, to prevent the introduction of new species. Rather than allocate scarce resources to another study, we need to focus our efforts and resources on action.